

(Washington, DC) - U.S. Representative Chet Edwards today voted against H.R. 3961, a physician payment bill, after the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office determined it would add \$210 billion to the national debt over the next 10 years. The bill blocks a scheduled reduction in the Medicare payment rate for doctors due to take effect in January. Edwards supports fixing the payment problem but believes it should be paid for.

"Our nation is facing a \$1.4 trillion deficit this year and next. While we must fix the 21% planned reduction in physicians' Medicare payments, it is fiscally irresponsible to not pay for that fix. It is time for Washington to wake up and realize that unchecked federal deficits could harm our economy and our children's future."

Ironically, House leaders attached legislation to the bill to make Pay-As-You-Go budget policies permanent law, which help prevent increases in the deficit by requiring the costs of legislation to be offset with savings elsewhere in the budget. However, the cost of the physician bill was exempted from Pay-As-You-Go policies under this bill. Edwards authored language that passed the House in July to make Pay-As-You-Go budget policies permanent law, and return Congress to the fiscally responsible policies that led to budget surpluses in the 1990s.

"The pay-as-you-go principle is one that American families and businesses live by everyday. It's just common sense, and what doesn't make sense is to combine a \$210 billion increase in the national debt with a Pay-As-You-Go bill. That doesn't send a message that Congress is serious about reducing trillion dollar plus annual deficits.

"People generally understand that deficits will occur during a time of war and national recession, but as the economy is beginning to slowly grow out of the worst recession since the Great Depression, it is time to stop digging the deficit hole deeper. Real pay as you go policies and putting our nation on a glide path to a balanced budget would create the kind of consumer confidence that would help our economy grow both in the short-run and long-run."

Edwards is a senior member of the House Budget Committee.